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Capital Transcriber's Aide Pleads To Lesser Charge in Spying Case

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 — A former messenger for a Washington company that transcribes Congressional proceedings pleaded guilty today to a charge of supplying national security documents to a person who was not entitled to receive them.

The plea was entered by Randy M. Jeffries, 26 years old, in exchange for a promise by the Government to drop a charge of delivering classified material to the Soviet Union, which carried a possible sentence of life in prison. Under the plea bargain, Mr. Jeffries faces a prison sentence of up to 10 years.

Mr. Jeffries showed little emotion as he announced his plea in Federal District Court in Washington. "My client is very happy with the resolution," said G. Allen Dale, his lawyer. "He didn't want to face life in prison."

Judge Gerhard A. Gesell refused to free Mr. Jeffries pending sentencing, saying: "Given the nature of the offense, he is going to go to jail," the judge said. "He might as well start serving his time now." Prosecutors said they expected Mr. Jeffries to be sentenced next month.

He was arrested in December after offering to sell three classified documents for $5,000 to a Government agent who was posing as a Soviet spy, prosecutors said. In a written summary of the case, they suggested that Mr. Jeffries was detected by eavesdropping on a telephone used by Soviet diplomats here.

Officials have said that Mr. Jeffries provided Soviet operatives with portions of a transcript of a top-secret Congressional hearing on military communications. Congressional sources said the hearing included discussion of a wide array of communications equipment, including a plane designed to relay orders to nuclear submarines.

A Federal official knowledgeable about the case said the Government agreed to the plea bargain out of fear that sensitive information would be divulged at a trial. Others have suggested that the Government was worried about its lack of physical evidence in the case; none of the documents stolen by Mr. Jeffries from his employers have been recovered.

United States Attorney Joseph E. diGenova said prosecutors had a strong case against Mr. Jeffries. Intelligence agencies had been consulted about the plea bargain and considered it "satisfactory," Mr. diGenova said. He said that an investigation in the case was continuing.

A Federal law-enforcement official said that criminal charges might be filed against employees of the Acme Reporting Company, the concern that employed Mr. Jeffries. The company is under investigation on charges of handling classified material recklessly, the official said. Spokesmen for Acme did not return telephone calls today from a reporter.

In an eight-page summary of the case made public today, Mr. diGenova said that Mr. Jeffries had been asked by his employers Dec. 14 to destroy secret Government transcripts even though he was not cleared for access to any classified information.

"Instead of doing as directed, Jeffries maintained some of the documents and secreted them in a hiding place until he left work," the summary said.

Later that day, it continued, Mr. Jeffries called Soviet officials working in Washington. According to a transcript of the conversation, which was apparently recorded by the law-enforcement authorities who had tapped the line, Mr. Jeffires identified himself as "Dano" and said that he wanted to sell three classified documents. "Very, uh, classified top-secret information," he was quoted as saying.

Visited 'Soviet Establishment'

The summary said that Mr. Jeffries then took a taxi to a "Soviet establishment" in Washington, which officials had previously identified as the office of the Soviet military attaché, and spent about half an hour there.

Mr. Jeffries later told a friend he had given sample pages from the documents to Soviet diplomats and requested $5,000 for the complete set, prosecutors said.

On Dec. 20, a Federal agent posing as a Soviet agent phoned Mr. Jeffries at home and told him that he was "ready to do business," Mr. diGenova said in his summary of the case. Mr. Jeffries was arrested that evening.

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